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OFFICE OF

THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF OKLAHOMA

OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLA.

No. SB 552

June 9, 20*23*
TIME SIGNED: *3:48 pm*

TO THE HONORABLE PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE
AND MEMBERS OF THE OKLAHOMA SENATE
FIRST REGULAR SESSION OF THE
FIFTY-NINTH OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE

ENROLLED SENATE BILL NO. 552:

Pursuant to the authority vested in me by Section 11 of Article VI of the Oklahoma Constitution, I have vetoed Enrolled Senate Bill 552.

Enrolled Senate Bill 552 would, in many instances, require county jails to hold and provide restorative treatment, therapy, or training for individuals deemed incompetent prior to conviction. Currently, the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services is, by statute, generally expected to take custody of those individuals and provide necessary competency restoration services. This, of course, does not prohibit jails from providing treatment options while individuals wait for space to become available through the Department; many jails do, in fact, provide some level of restorative services.

Nonetheless, we must do a better job addressing rampant mental health issues plaguing our society. This includes taking a hard look at the methods and structures being used to restore to competency those criminal defendants who may be afflicted by mental health disorders. Although this Bill is well intended, it is not the right solution at this time. For instance, many county jails do not yet have necessary treatment staff, environments, and frameworks in place to handle the responsibilities this Bill would create.

I urge stakeholders such as district attorneys, law enforcement officials (e.g. sheriffs), the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, and other mental health professionals to collaborate well before the next legislative session to identify creative solutions available to address the overarching issues—where (e.g. outpatient-type treatment) and how we meaningfully treat and restore individuals temporarily deemed incompetent to stand trial. Many solutions are surely available without the need for legislative changes. If we are to implement legislative mandates, we must first ensure the requisite structures are in place.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Enrolled Senate Bill 552.

BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA